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Message Text

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54
ORIGIN IO-13

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ARA-06 EUR-12 EA-07 NEA-10 ISO-00 INRE-00

SSO-00 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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S E C R E T STATE 167345

E.O. 11652: GDS

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SECRET

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SUBJECT: UGANDAN ROLE IN AIR FRANCE HIJACKING

REF: STATE 166529 ; BUCHAREST 3958 NOTAL; STOCKHOLM 3681
NOTAL

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1. ADDRESSEES OF REFTEL HAVE UNDERSTANDABLY ASKED FOR SUCH EVIDENCE AS IS AVAILABLE AND USEABLE WITH FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS REGARDING THE UGANDAN ROLE IN ASSISTING PALESTINIAN HIJACKERS OF THE AIR FRANCE AIRLINER HELD AT ENTEBBE.

2. A KEY INDICATION OF GENERAL AMIN'S ATTITUDE IS CONTAINED IN HIS STATEMENT AT THE OAU AFTER THE ISRAELI RESCUE OPERATION IN WHICH HE DEFINED HIS ROLE. IN THE COURSE OF THIS STATEMENT HE STATED, INTER ALIA, THAT "THE PRESENCE OF SEVERAL EUROPEANS AMONG THE HIJACKERS INDICATED THE SUPPORT WHICH THE PALESTINIANS HAD". SECONDLY, HE STATED, THAT IN HIS VIEW NOT ALL THE ISRAELIS ABOARD THE AIRLINER DESERVED TO BE EXECUTED.

3. THESE TWO STATEMENTS REVEAL AMIN'S OWN DESIRE TO RATIONALIZE THE SYMPATHY HE SHOWED THE HIJACKERS AND THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THEIR THREATS AGAINST THE PASSENTERS, OR AT LEAST SOME OF THEM.

4. THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE HAS DEVELOPED CONCERNING THE UGANDIAN ROLE. POSTS MAY USE THIS INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE.

5. TESTIMONY SUGGESTING THAT AMIN WAS NOT IN CAHOOTS WITH THE HIJACKERS HAS BEEN PROVIDED BY MEMBERS OF THE AIR FRANCE CREW, WHO MAY BE HOPING TO SAVE THE PLANE.

-- THE FRENCH FLIGHT ENGINEER, ON RETURN TO PARIS, ON JULY 4, READ A STATEMENT PRAISING AMIN FOR "HIS CONSTANT CONCERN AND FOR A NURSE AND A DOCTOR PUT CONSTANTLY AT THE PASSENGERS' DISPOSAL."

-- ON JULY 5, THE COMMANDER OF THE AIR FRANCE PLANE DENIED THAT UGANDAN SOLDIERS HAD EVER "SUBSTITUTED FOR THE HIJACKERS," AND SAID THAT "THE WATCH OVER US WAS EXCLUSIVELY SECURED BY THE HIJACKERS."
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WE HAVE HEARD ONE REPORT THAT AMIN'S BEHAVIOR MAY HAVE BEEN CONDITIONED IN PART BY HIS DESIRE TO EFFECT THE RELEASE OF PALESTINIANS (OR UGANDIANS?) HELD IN KENYA.

6. THE FOLLOWING EVIDENCE HOWEVER PRESENTS A DIFFERENT PICTURE.

-- BASED ON THE DEBRIEFING OF PASSENGERS, THE GERMAN TERRORIST BOESE RADIOED THE POPULAR FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINE (PFLP) OFFICE IN KAMPALA AND WAS MET ON ARRIVAL AT ENTEBBE BY TWO ADDITIONAL TERRORISTS AND LATER BY THREE MORE. UGANDAN TROOPS ENCIRCLED THE AREA, BUT FRATERNIZED WITH THE TERRORISTS AND ON OCCASION MAINTAINED GUARD OVER ONE OR ANOTHER

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GROUP OF HOSTAGES WHEN NO TERRORIST WAS PRESENT. THE REPORT CONCLUDED THAT AMIN WAS COMPLETELY HAND-IN-GLOVE WITH THE TERRORISTS AND NOTED THE IMPRESSION OF THE PASSENGERS THAT AMIN WAS IN ON THE AFFAIR FROM THE BEGINNING.

-- A RELIABLE WESTERN DIPLOMATIC SOURCE (FYI THE WEST GERMAN EMBASSY IN KAMPALA END FYI) REPORTED THAT THE UGANDANS HAD NO PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF THE HIJACKING BUT THAT THEY WERE ACTIVELY ASSISTING THE TERRORISTS, THEY BELIEVED. THE SOURCE UNDERSTOOD THAT AMIN HAD PERMITTED REINFORCEMENTS TO JOIN THE TERRORISTS. THESE REINFORCEMENTS APPARENTLY WERE PALESTINIANS ALREADY IN UGANDA TRAINING THE ARMY. ACCORDING TO THE SOURCE, UGANDAN TROOPS HAD RELIEVED THE TERRORISTS IN GUARDING THE HOSTAGES DURING THE NIGHT OF JULY 1 SO THAT THE LATTER COULD SLEEP.

7. MORE DIRECT EVIDENCE OF UGANDAN BEHAVIOR COMES FROM EMBASSY PARIS' DEBRIEFING OF AMERICANS AMONG THE PASSENGERS RELEASED BEFORE THE ISRAELI RAID:

"...ALL (AMERICANS) AGREED THAT AMIN HAD PROBABLY LEARNED THAT UGANDA WAS THE PLANE'S DESTINATION BEFORE IT LANDED, AND SOME SPECULATED THAT HE HAD BEEN AWARE OF THE PLOT BEFORE THE HIJACKING. BOESE SAID WHEN THEY

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LEFT LIBYA FOR UGANDA THAT PERHAPS AMIN WOULD BE AT THE AIRPORT WAITING FOR THEM. THE PLANE TAXIED AROUND THE FIELD FOR ABOUT AN HOUR BEFORE BOESE GOT OFF THE PLANE AND MADE JOYFUL CONTACT WITH THE FOUR WAITING ARAB FIGURES.... IT WAS CLEAR THAT AMIN GAVE SUPPORT TO THE COMMANDOS (I.E., HIJACKERS) SINCE THEY ACQUIRED MORE AND MORE LETHAL WEAPONS AFTER ARRIVAL AND THE UGANDAN TROOPS WERE CLEARLY THERE AS A BACK-UP FORCE NOT JUST 'IMPRISONING' COMMANDOS BUT ALSO HELPING IMPRISON PASSENGERS. GIVEN THE PHYSICAL SET-UP, THE GREAT NUMBER OF UGANDANS, AND THEIR CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE PLO, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN QUITE EASY, MOST THOUGHT, FOR THE UGANDANS TO HAVE DISARMED OR KILLED THE COMMANDOS HAD THEY WISHED. IN FACT, THE PASSENGERS BEGAN TO FEAR THE UGANDANS EVEN MORE THAN THE FOUR ARABS WHO HAD TAKEN OVER ON ARRIVAL, JUST AS THEY INITIALLY HAD FEARED THE FOUR ARABS MORE THAN THE ORIGINAL HIJACKERS.

"AMIN HIMSELF MADE NO BONES ABOUT HIS SYMPATHY FOR THE AIMS OF THE COMMANDOS. HE SAID THAT HE WAS HAPPY TO HELP THE COMMANDOS SINCE HE SHARED THEIR OPINIONS. HE TOLD THE PASSENGERS THAT IF THEIR GOVERNMENTS WISHED TO SEE THEM ALIVE, THEY MUST COOPERATE IN MEETING THE JUST DEMANDS OF THE HIJACKERS."

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8. AMIN'S VARIOUS ACTIONS COULD IN PART BE EXPLAINED BY HIS ASSERTION THAT NOT TO HAVE ACCEDED TO THE TERRORIST DEMANDS WOULD HAVE ENDANGERED THE LIVES OF THE HOSTAGES. HOWEVER, THE APPARENT USE OF UGANDAN TROOPS TO GUARD THE HOSTAGES AND AMIN'S OWN STATEMENTS TO PASSENGERS THAT HE WAS HAPPY TO HELP THE TERRORISTS SINCE HE SHARED THEIR OPINIONS INDICATE THAT THE UGANDAN FORCES NOT ONLY MADE NO ATTEMPT TO CAPTURE THE TERRORISTS, BUT PROVIDED THEM AID AND COMFORT AS WELL.

9. FOLLOWING ARE ADDITIONAL CITATIONS FROM OPEN PRESS ACCOUNTS PROVIDED BY ISRAELI EMBASSY, WHICH HELP TO FLESH OUT THE MATERIAL CITED ABOVE. BEGIN TEXT QUOTE FRENCH OFFICIALS SEE SIGNS AMIN, HIJACKERS COLLUDED (SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES) PARIS, JULY 4 - OFFICIALS AND RELEASED HOSTAGES SAID HERE TODAY THAT

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THEY HAD SUBSTANTIAL EVIDENCE THAT PRESIDENT IDI AMIN HAD BEEN IN COLLUSION WITH THE HIJACKERS OF AN AIR FRANCE AIRBUS IN THE SEIZURE OF THE PLANE AS WELL AS AFTER IT LANDED IN UGANDA ....

A HIGHLY PLACED FRENCH SOURCE SAID THAT PRESIDENT AMIN HAD REFUSED TO ALLOW PIERRE RENARD, THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO UGANDA, OR A SPECIAL FRENCH ENVOY TO DEAL WITH THE HIJACKERS DIRECTLY. WHILE PRESIDENT AMIN WAS OUT OF THE COUNTRY, MESSAGES (TO AND) FROM ISRAEL HAD TO BE PASSED BY FRENCH GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES THROUGH THE SOMALIAN AMBASSADOR . . .

WHEN GENERAL AMIN RETURNED FROM MAURITIUS YESTERDAY, HE RESUMED THE ROLE OF MEDIATOR. HE TOLD THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR THAT DEMANDS FOR THE RELEASE OF 53 PRO-PALESTINIAN PRISONERS IN ISRAEL, KENYA AND EUROPE MUST BE MET BY EARLY TODAY, OR ALL THE HOSTAGES WOULD BE KILLED.

OFFICIALS HERE POINTED OUT THAT ON THE LIST OF PRISONERS WERE FIVE UGANDANS HELD IN KENYA ON CHARGES OF ATTEMPTING TO ASSASSINATE PRESIDENT JOMO KENYATTA . . . ENDQUOTE (NEW YORK TIMES, JULY 5, 1976)

QUOTE EYE-WITNESSES SPOKE OF IDI AMIN ARRIVING AT ENTEBBE AND EMBRACING THE LEADER OF THE GANG THAT HAD HIJACKED THE FRENCH AIRBUS OVER GREECE. END QUOTE (SUNDAY TIMES, LONDON, JULY 4, 1976) END TEXT.

10. ACCORDING TO ASSOCIATED PRESS REPORTS, THE LONDON OBSERVER AND THE SUNDAY TIMES QUOTED SEVERAL OF THE RELEASED HOSTAGES AS SAYING THAT THERE WAS FULL

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COLLABORATION BETWEEN UGANDA'S PRESIDENT IDI AMIN AND HIS MEN AND THE HIJACKERS:

(A) WHEN AMIN ARRIVED ON THE SCENE, HE AND THE LEADER OF THE TERRORISTS EMBRACED; AMIN ALSO SHOOK HANDS WITH SOME OF THE OTHER HIJACKERS;

(B) THE SUNDAY TIMES (JULY 4) WROTE THAT "THE UGANDANS
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SUPPLIED ADDITIONAL WEAPONS TO THE HIJACKERS," AND THAT "PALESTINIANS LIVING IN UGANDA ALSO JOINED THE HIJACKERS AT THE AIRPORT."

(C) UGANDAN SOLDIERS INTERMITTENTLY TOOK OVER THE HIJACKERS' GUARD FUNCTIONS, SO THAT THE TERRORISTS WERE ABLE TO REST UP AND COME BACK IN THE MORNING REFRESHED.

THE SAME SOURCE CITES REPORTS FROM DIPLOMATIC SOURCES IN KAMPALA THAT THE HIJACKERS WERE CALM THROUGHOUT, AND APPEARED CONFIDENT THAT THE UGANDAN TROOPS WOULD NOT INTERVENE AGAINST THEM (AS, INDEED, THEY DID NOT).

11. RELEASED HOSTAGES TOLD A REPORTER OF THE LONDON OBSERVER, ACCORDING TO REUTERS (JULY 3), THAT UGANDAN SOLDIERS, UNDER DIRECT ORDERS FROM AMIN, SUPERVISED THE SEPARATION OF THE JEWISH FROM THE GENTILE PASSENGERS.

12. ON AUGUST 10, 1975, IDI AMIN WAS QUOTED BY RADIO KAMPALA AS TELLING OFFICERS AND ENLISTED MEN OF A UGANDAN ARMORED BRIGADE THAT PLO LEADER YASSIR ARAFAT HAD SENT PALESTINIAN ARAB PILOTS TO SERVE IN THE UGANDAN AIR FORCE "IN MILITARY OPERATIONS IN AFRICA AGAINST IMPERIALISM."

13. THE PALESTINIAN NEWS AGENCY QUOTES THE "VOICE OF PALESTINE" RADIO STATION (AUGUST 15, 1975) THAT PRESIDENT AMIN HAD, ON AUGUST 13, MET WITH THE PALESTINIAN PILOTS TRAINING IN UGANDA AND, IN THE PRESENCE OF TOP UGANDAN ARMY OFFICERS, TOLD THEM THAT THEY WERE UNDER HIS PERSONAL SUPERVISION. HE ALSO USED THE OCCASION TO EXPRESS HIS GOVERNMENT'S THANKS TO THE PLO FOR ITS ASSISTANCE TO UGANDA. THE SAME SOURCE ON OCTOBER 13 REPORTED THAT A "SUICIDE SQUADRON" OF PALESTINIAN AND UGANDAN PILOTS HAD UNDERGONE TRAINING IN SOUTHERN UGANDA.

14. EARLY IN AUGUST 1975, ARAFAT RECEIVED A TELEGRAM FROM AMIN IN WHICH THE PRESIDENT OF UGANDA NOTIFIED THE PLO LEADER THAT UGANDA HAD ALLOTTED 5,000 FEDAN OF LAND TO BE CULTIVATED BY PALESTINIAN ARABS, THIS LAND
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TO BE CONSIDERED PLO PROPERTY (MIDDLE EAST NEWS AGENCY, CAIRO, AUGUST 8, 1975).

15. THE SUNDAY TIMES OF LONDON SAYS THAT SOME 400 PALESTINIAN ARABS LIVE IN UGANDA, MOST OF THEM IN A CAMP NEAR ENTEBBE. THEY ARE EMPLOYED IN THE UGANDAN ARMY AS MILITARY ADVISERS AND PILOTS, AND AS BODYGUARDS FOR IDI AMIN.

16. WE EXPECT ADDITIONAL AND MORE COMPLETE INFORMATION TOMORROW AND WILL PROVIDE IT. IN THE INTERIM, ADDRESSEES SHOULD UTILIZE FIRST OPPORTUNITY TO PASS ON AS MUCH OF FOREGOING INFORMATION AS MAY BE USEFUL. CURRENT EXPECTATION IS THAT SECURITY COUNCIL WILL BEGIN CONSULTING JULY 7 ON OAU REQUEST FOR SC MEETING WHICH IS NOW IN HANDS OF ITALIAN SC PRESIDENT, ALTHOUGH FORMAL MEETING NOT EXPECTED UNTIL JULY 8. ROBINSON

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ISLAMABAD
BUCHAREST
DAR ES SALAAM
MOSCOW
PEKING
GEORGETOWN
COTONOU
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